



**UNION OF HELLENIC
CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE**

Brussels Representative Office



Arbeitsgemeinschaft Norddeutscher Industrie- und Handelskammern
-Vertretung bei der Europäischen Union-

Association of Northern German Chambers of Commerce and Industry
-Representation to the European Union-

Association des Chambres de Commerce et d'Industrie de l'Allemagne
du Nord -Représentation auprès de l'Union Européenne-

Press Release

March 17, 2010

First cross-cutting European Maritime Network Launch of BLUE CHAMBER NETWORK

The *Blue Chamber Network* was established yesterday under the participation of EU Commissioner Maria Damanaki at the European Parliament.

Under the auspices of Rodi Kratsa-Tsagaropoulou, Vice-President of the European Parliament, local, regional and national CCIs of major port cities and coastal regions in Europe discussed EU maritime policy issues of strategic importance to European CCIs and impact on European SMEs. The *Blue Chamber Network* is the first European horizontal network representing the overarching interests of SMEs in all maritime sectors. The networks' purpose is sharing information, improving communication and streamlining of expertise in order to pro-actively shape EU maritime policy initiatives.

Reflecting the importance of this cross-cutting network, EU Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Maria Damanaki said: "*This initiative is very promising. It brings together small and medium-sized enterprises – the backbone of our economy – with a focus on maritime policy.*"

MEP Rodi Kratsa-Tsagaropoulou emphasized that the *Blue Chamber Network* "*is very important as it will link the maritime policy and the economic activity of all EU member states.*" MEP Georgios Koumoutsakos welcomed the launch of the network in his speech as an "*ambitious and interesting initiative*". As Chair of the European Parliament's intergroup Seas and Coastal Areas, MEP Corinne Lepage addressed the maritime Chamber experts: "*We need the private sector's inputs to address several crucial issues such as employment in the maritime sector and adaptation to climate change. We will cooperate with Chambers on these topics.*"

The members of the *Blue Chamber Network* are: Belgium, Croatia, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Serbia, Spain and Turkey. Austria, Ireland, Sweden and the United Kingdom so far act as observers.

The next workshop is scheduled to take place in Malta in autumn of 2010.

For more information please contact:

Association of Northern German CCIs / Representation to the EU (Dr Mary Papischinopoulou, Mary.Papischinopoulou@bruessel.ihknord.de)

Union of Hellenic Chambers of Commerce / Brussels Representative Office (Eirini Konstantinidou, eirini.konstantinidou.uhcci@skynet.be)